DOVER HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 23, 2011
SIMON CIRCLE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

PRESENT: Commissioners Dawn Allen-Pyne, Chair Roy Sudler, Jr., Vice Chair Willie Jones, Ellen Wasfi, George Steele, and Phyllis Edamatsu.

Chair Sudler opened the meeting at 6:30 pm with a moment of silence. Then he told those assembled that the DHRC was convening this meeting to listen to and learn from the community, assist where possible, and then transmit the concerns to the City Council. He briefly outlined the charge of the Commission and told people they would have 3 minutes to relay their ideas.

Darlene Piper began the discussions with her concern about her Dover Electric costs. She feels that people who are low income, seniors, vets, and disabled should be assessed a lower deposit for utility service. She also stated that she was treated discourteously when speaking on the phone to a representative at the Utility Office.

Rosie Richardson was also concerned about the high cost of her utilities. She agreed with Ms. Piper that the elderly and low income like she are hardest hit.

Jeremy Kopp spoke next to the Commission about his problem finding housing after being released from serving time as a sex offender. He said that landlords do not want to rent to him, or the only units offered are below standard and unfit to live in.

Tiya Handy spoke about having problems with high utility bills, and having her hours at work cut back. She came to the meeting to see if she could find help.

Pastor Gregory Gordon Sr. told the Commission about his new ministry opening up on March 5 at the Salvation Army. He provides breakfast, and presents his "Man as the Head of the Family" sermons. He is challenging men to stand up and take responsibility in their families as fathers and leaders.

Pilar Figuerda expressed concern for the Hispanic community in Dover. She knows people who work in local restaurants who are treated unfairly but who are hesitant to report these abuses because they are afraid of being investigated by the INS or deported. She equates their plight to modern slavery.

Commissioner Ellen Wasfi advised her to get a group together and go to the Dept. Of Labor. She also advised Ms. Pilar that she would be a good person to articulate the concerns of the group, and that they would have more clout if there were several people voicing the same complaints.

Gerald Rocha brought up his fear about the impact of gang related lifestyles and activities on his students. He sees them fascinated with gang symbols, clothes, and graffiti. He sees the problem is becoming serious, and we have to admit it. Dover is a small enough community that we should be able to intervene and keep kids away from gangs. He feels schools should build an environment conductive to learning, not just baby-sitting the kids.

Commissioner Dawn Allen-Pyne felt students should be held responsible for their own actions, not just the parents or teachers.

Donald Hacket commented that if Delaware is the first state, why is it so poor? Dover is the state capitol but it seems that no money is allocated to fund parks or activities for kids.

Councilman Tom Leary stood up to share some information he had about the new Dover Boys & Girls Club, which is being built out by Shutte Park. The City is moving forward with plans, which include a pool. Also he added that if anyone is treated unfairly by Dover Electric to call his or her councilman for resolution.

Councilman Gene Ruane arrived late but just in time to report on the new Dover Public Library. He described the teen loft designed to help teens study and work on homework. He thinks the library will be a safe place for kids to gather and keep them away from gang activity. There will also be a job center in the basement where the Dept. Of Labor will offer help for job seekers.

Chair Sudler acknowledged Brian Lewis in the audience and thanked him for his service on the DHRC. Then he moved on to adjourn the meeting, which closed at 8:00 pm.

Minutes taken and submitted
by MARY WALSON